**Intersectionality and fatherhood: Theorizing non-hegemonic fatherhoods**

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**Abstract**

Contemporary fathers' research has disclosed the multifaceted and dynamic character of fatherhood as an historical construction affected by numerous factors such as class, race, gender and culture. It has also opened the floor for different theoretical perspectives. However, main critiques point to the need for a more inclusive fatherhood research agenda by addressing the array of non-hegemonic fathering groups and for developing theoretical frameworks capable to capture in non-judgmental way the many layers and social contexts that shape their identities, behaviors and cultures. Echoing this critics, this article suggests a revision of the ways in which these groups of non-hegemonic fathers are represented in research by incorporating the intersectionality theoretical framework into current scholarship on fathers. Drawing from the Israel case study, the article examines theories of fatherhood as viewed 'from the margins', applying understandings from the field of Intersectionality to theories of fatherhood. Israel poses a rich ground to tackle this theoretical challenge. For Israel is characterized by dominant models of masculinity and fatherhood, expressed through a very hegemonic model of masculinity on the one hand and a robust normative family model on the other. These dominant models contrast with a fragmented society, featuring a variety of ethnicities and cultures and high levels of ethnic and class inequalities.

Keywords: Fatherhood; Intersectionality; Diversity; Non-hegemonic fatherhood.

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**Introduction**

Fatherhood has evolved in the last decades from an omitted research and theory area to a rich and prosperous scholarship topic (Lamb, 2000; Fagan et al, 2014). Today fatherhood studies have flourished from a blunt obliviousness to a richness in terms of themes, disciplines, populations and theoretical perspectives (Schoppe-Sulivan & Fagan, 2020). However, despite the remarkable development of theoretical and methodological prisms in this area, one of the main critiques on fathers' research still lies on the need for a more inclusive research and theory development capable to match of the magnitude of the array, diversity and complexity of fathering characteristics and representations, especially among non-hegemonic, oppressed father populations (Coley, 2001). Even presently, main fatherhood theoretical development have mostly addressed middle-class, Anglo-centered, dominant mainstream fatherhood whereas global, non-hegemonic, marginalized father groups have remained undertheorized (Roopnarine, 2015). This article seeks to fill this shortfall by reviewing a more inclusive theoretical perspective to grapple oppressed fatherhoods. For this purpose, we suggest to incorporate the intersectionality theoretical framework into current scholarship on relegated father populations. Drawing in Israeli research of non-hegemonic, marginalized fathers, the article shows a singular case study for this purpose. For Israel has a clear dominant model of masculinity and family but still poses a highly ethnically, culturally and social-class diverse and polarized fathers population. The article is divided in four sections. First, it briefly reviews studies on non-hegemonic, relegated fatherhood groups. Secondly, it present current debates on Intersectionality theory. Third, the article presents examples of marginalized father studies in Israel and last, we discuss implications for the development of a theory of Intersectionality for non-hegemonic fatherhoods.

**Literature review**

**Relegated fatherhoods**

Historically, fathers’ scholarship was until a few decades ago a missing piece in social research (Lamb, 2010). The current expanding interest in this scholar field has different explanations (Schoppe & Fagan, 2020). Some explain this interest in fathers as a response to the absenteeism of fathers in psychoanalytic and developmental psychology main theories (Madsen 2009). This striking void called for a revision of the role of fathers in children development. The second set of explanations center on the impact of feminism which marked a turning point in the history of patriarchy, making the gendered uncontested fathers' authority and supremacy a main target for criticism in the gender equality project (Connors, 2011). A third explanation deals with the massive decay in the level of biological father commitment to their families in many countries, especially from fathers from low-income, ethnic minorities in the US (Roy & Dyson, 2010; Cabrera et al, 2015). The first two explanations for the blossoming of father studies were focused on middle class, white, Anglo-centered normative fathers, usually in "intact", two heterosexual married parents. Currently, most fatherhood scholarship still centers in "white, American, middle-class men in monogamous marriages" (Inhorn et al, 2014. pp. 2). According to Ball (2009) the literature on fathering largely represents the experiences of middle class fathers of European heritage. Hence, this occurs despite the fact that most of the father global population fall far from these characteristics. According to the United Nation official statistics, nearly of the half world's population and probably half of the father global population lives on less than $2.50 a day and one billion children worldwide are living in poverty (United Nations, 2019). Though, most theoretical work on fatherhood have overlooked these groups of fathers and the existing research and theory on these non-hegemonic groups of fathers used to look at them under essentialist, western and middle class lens, namely, under the lens of the "responsible fatherhood" or “deficit theory” discourse (Roer-Strier et al, 2005; Randles, 2018). For example, studies show that even under the most harsh conditions of oppression and brutal abuse, fatherhood and family life was a vital resource that helped Black men to endure the oppression of slavery (Islam, 2019). Even though, these men were usually portrayed as detached fathers (Hilde, 2020). According to Griswold (1999) slave fathers may have played a vital role in Black family life even though their power was tightly circumscribed by their White masters. In the same vein, indigenous fathers in Canada, one of the most excluded and understudied father groups, suffered from the same stereotypes (Ball, 2009; 2010 ). The same faith played for Black fathers in Apartheid South Africa which were portrayed as unreliable and absent fathers (Richter et al, 2015). In his rich ethnographic studies, Oscar Lewis framed impoverished fathers in Mexico and Central America through the theoretical deficit framework of culture of poverty. Lewis (1961) remarks showed that impoverished fathers in the *vecindades* (slums) often tended to abandon their children or when remaining in their families they minimized emotional bonding with their children (Waller, 2019). The culture of poverty portrayed a machoist, authoritarian figure, mostly inattentive to the family sphere. This prototype father under the Culture of Poverty theory was an untrustworthy provider and an inadequate nurturer. Contrarily, Fanon showed how the colonization project deteriorated the family structure and demolished the father figure in the colonies )Gibson, 2003). Drawing on his experiences in Algeria, Fanon's works are significant for their contribution to understand the misrepresentations of fathers and fatherhoods by the colonizers themselves (Stanovsky, 2007). Today, the devaluated portray of non-hegemonic fathers across industrialized nations is not surprising since the breadwinner role is still the shared component of hegemonic masculinity (Nelson, 2004; Kimmel et al., 2005). Poverty, marginalization and social exclusion are all risk factors to the psychological well-being of fathers (Anderson et al., 2005). These limiting variables exclude many fathers from the privileges of the dominant gender status, to the point where low-income working fathers are deprived from dominant standards of what it means to be a man (Strier, 2005, 2008; Barker, 2005). Nelson and Edin ( 2015 ) showed how significant economic and cultural changes have distorted the meaning of fatherhood among the urban poor. Through rich ethnography they show the structural obstacles faced by low-income fathers in their family life. Studies have showed that working poor fathers have to cope with difficult challenges to prove their economic self-sufﬁciency, which is usually done by means of holding a decent job (Baxandall, 2004; Crompton, 1999).

In sum, two distinct research traditions emerge regarding the fatherhood of men from excluded groups, which we may term 'deficit theory' and 'structural theories.' These two traditions are disputed regarding the cause of paternal dysfunction – while the first focuses on deficits of these fathers, the second points to structural reasons. However, this explicit dispute covers an implicit agreement between these traditions. Both accept the assumption that non-hegemonic fathers, indeed, fail to adequately fulfilling their paternal role. In this paper, we wish to challenge the assumption of the inadequacy of non-hegemonic fatherhood. We propose the use of intersectionality theory to elucidate the complexity of fatherhood cultures and behaviors under multiple systems of oppression, offering a more complex view of relegated fatherhoods.

**Intersectionality**

Intersectionality Theory project is a call to understand complexity (Cho et al, 2013). This theory seeks to gauge the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (Rogers et al, 2013). The main theoretical aim of the theory is to describe and analyze the way in which intersecting sets of identity affect individuals, groups and institutions (Shields, 2008 ). Intersectionality theory is seen as one of the main current theoretical frames to discuss the interlocked relation between different layers of oppression. It defies traditional atomistic approaches toward the study of race, gender, class, and sexuality by addressing these categories as interdependent factors that affect and limit people overall life experiences (Anderson, 2011). As other critical theories, it tackles issues of power, privilege, and oppression. It tends to complicate simplistic systems of analysis recognizing the complexities of inequality. Individuals may enjoy of some privileges while concurrently suffering different expressions of oppression linked to background or identity. Intersectionality seeks to explain the dynamics of systems of oppression that experience, identity, and society. According to Carasthatis (2014), Intersectionality has evolved into the dominant path to conceptualize the relation between systems of oppression which construct our multiple identities and our social locations in hierarchies of power and privilege. It has deepened the study of oppressed sub-groups of women in gender studies (Chant, 2011). Intersectionality means a turn from essentialist and exclusionary views of identity and oppression (Hancock 2007a, 2007b). It contributes towards understanding the complexities of gender, race, class, and sexuality through the prism of difference (Zinn et al, 2019).

The term Intersectionality was coined by Crenshaw, a Black feminist scholar, who claimed that feminist scholarship had largely ignored the experiences of Black women. In her view, feminist studies, practices and activism had mainly centered on white, middle class women (Crenshaw, 1989). Originally, Intersectionality started as an explorative project to study the interconnection of different layers of oppression in the lives of women of color. Later, intersectional theory has moved to center on issues of social identity. Crenshaw as well as Collins (1990) acknowledged that their theory rejects an additive model of identity. They seek a deconstruction of identities in oppressed groups to build in a recognition of the deep complexities of identities and a reconstruction of their identities through collective political action. Afterward, Choo and Ferree (2010) advanced the intersectional theoretical project by addressing the range of ways scholars analyzed the social world.

Intersectionality has not been immune to critics. Some call it a "buzzword" (Davis 2008). Others claims critic it is a vagueness that help to de-politicized oppression. Some other voices question the obstinate association of Intersectionality with women of color which "obscures the very richness of the content— the multivocality for which Intersectionality is known (Honcock, 2007a, 249– 50). Interestingly, Crenshaw asserted that Intersectionality framework may provide a shared ground for black men and women to address issues of race and gender justice. In the context of this article we ask whether Intersectionality which was originally based on the critical study of women oppression can be applied to the study of relegated fatherhoods.

**Intersectionality, hegemonic masculinity and relegated fatherhoods**

This section asks the possible contributions and limitations of Intersectionality as a theoretical construct applicable and valid to understand non-hegemonic father groups? What might be it theoretical contribution to a deep understanding of non-hegemonic forms of fatherhood? Christensen and Larsen (2008) suggest that the concept of Intersectionality complements the concept of hegemonic masculinities, in that it stresses the interaction between gender, class and other differentiating categories, and at the same time articulates different power structures and their reciprocating construction. Research showed that masculinity and fatherhood are both structured in part by sexuality, race, class, and age (Connell 1995; Hershey 1978; Plummer 1981). Differences of ethnicity, race, class, religion and sexuality shape the structure and contexts in which fatherhood is enacted. Few studies of intersectional masculinities theorize gender as a hierarchy within which some men, and some versions of masculinity and fatherhood are more dominant than others (Connell 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). According to Connell, the authority, respect, status, and material benefits associated with masculinity, namely, the patriarchal dividend—are not distributed evenly across social groups. Accordingly, ethnicity, race, class, or sexuality limit the extent to which men are able to benefit from gender inequality. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity has been especially influential in the deconstruction of essentialist and gendered views of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is defined as a practice that legitimizes [men's dominant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Androcentrism) position in society and justifies the subordination of the common male population and women and other marginalized ways of being a man. It is a configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy. Accordingly, masculinity is framed as a contested, dynamic, changing and hierarchically structured construction which is deeply embedded in class, gender, race, age, sex, and other divided and unequal social categories.

Consequently, fatherhood as a contextual, gendered, ethnic and class-based construct, is not insusceptible to hegemonic , dominant societal images of masculinity. In this sense, the intersectional theory can be seen as conducive to any intersectional analysis of fathers from non-hegemonic groups. Intersectional theory may amplify the scope of theoretical understanding of the dynamic of the intersections of gender, class, ethnicity, race, sexuality, and other social categories in the enactment of fatherhood. As in the case of intersectional motherhoods, the fatherhood construct is also arranged according to some social processes such as marginalisation, dominance, subordination, and other forms of oppression. In some ways, fatherhood reflects the social order as masculinity does. Hegemonic forms of fatherhood can be understood as formed in the intersections of gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and legitimated models of family organization whereas other forms of fatherhood are relegated. These marginalized, subordinated fatherhood constructions intersect with gender and sexuality, for example, in the case of gay fatherhood, or with citizenship in the case of unregistered fathers, or with class in the case of working poor fathers, or with race and ethnicity for example in the case of Black and Hispanic Fatherhoods in USA. Such thinking is rooted in the idea of multiple fatherhoods which reflects the multiplicity of masculinity, the hybridity of other identities and their embodiment in the hierarchical, unequal social order. Research on man and fathers frames gender as interconnected with other variables of inequality. Thus, we believe that these two theoretical traditions – hegemonic masculinity and Intersectionality – may allow us to challenge the implicit assumption regarding the inadequacy of non-hegemonic fathers. To illustrate our claim, we wish to offer some case studies from fatherhood in Israel.

**Non-hegemonic views of fatherhood: The Israeli case**

Israeli fatherhood exists in the intersection of four dominant social trends characterizing Israeli society: a dominant model of hegemonic masculinity; a robust and pervasive model of a normative family; a diverse society, composed of a variety of ethnicities and cultures; and high levels of ethnic and class inequality.

First, Israeli culture has been dominated by a prevalent model of hegemonic masculinity. This model highly influenced by Zionist ideology and by the ever-present Arab-Israeli and specifically Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Therefore, Israeli hegemonic masculinity is predominated by the image of the combat soldier, and especially the Ashkenazi (of European origin) soldier (Grosswirth Kachtan, 2019; Lomsky-Feder & Ben-Ari, 1999; Sasson-Levy, 2002, 2011).

Besides the model of the Jewish-Ashkenazi soldier, many other contesting forms of masculinity have been described in the literature. Ultra-Orthodox masculinity (Hakak, 2009), gay masculinity (Kaplan & Ben-Ari, 2000), Mizrahi masculinity (Grosswirth Kachtan, 2019; Sasson-Levy, 2002, 2011) have all been described in relation to the hegemonic model. In the spirit of Connel's conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity, alternative models of masculinities are seen as constructed in relation to the hegemonic model – they may be complicit, subordinate, or marginalized by the hegemonic masculinity, or protest against it, but are relational to it (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2019).

Another significant aspect affecting Israeli fatherhood is the robust model of the normative family which characterizes Israeli society. The most prominent aspect of Israeli familism is family size. The fertility rate in Israel is 3.11 - not only the highest among the OECD countries but almost double the average for OECD countries (1.7) (Anson & Ajayi, 2018; Okun, 2016). This high fertility rate, which is rising in recent decades, results in large families with many children. Other aspects of Israeli familism – such as high marriage rate, low divorce rate, low number of single families, and low age of first marriage – are not as exceptional as the fertility rate, but still point to the importance of the family in Israeli culture. The importance of familism in Israel is expressed not only through these statistical data but also through the centrality of the family in Israeli culture. Research shows that Israelis consider the family to be one of the most essential social institutions (Gavriel-Fried & Shilo, 2017). As Fogiel-Bijaoui & Rutlinger-Reiner (2013, p. viii) note, "marriage is perceived as the legitimate framework for bringing children into the world […] The woman is constructed first of all in terms of wife and mother." However, while Israeli familism devotes a central place to children and mothers, as Fogiel-Bijaoui & Rutlinger-Reiner note, the place for fathers is much more limited. While the participation of men in childcare and housework has risen somewhat in recent decades, it is still low both compared to women and men in other countries (Gont, 2007; Anabi, 2019; Kaplan, 2018). The centrality of the family does not open a space for men to expand their role as fathers; instead, it enforces traditional divisions of roles (Perez, 2010).

The third aspect affecting Israeli fatherhood is its diversity. Israeli society is comprised of a multitude of groups, separated along ethnic, national, religious, and class lines. Division is apparent between Jews and Palestinians, native-born and immigrants, Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews, Secular, religious and ultra-orthodox Jews, and other groups. However, one of the main factors fueling these divisions is the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, playing a major role in the relations between groups (Strier, 2015).

The fourth aspect is interconnected with the rising inequality in Israeli society. More than three decades of rampant neoliberalism have caused a steep rise in inequality, bringing inequality and poverty in Israel to very high levels (Lavee & Strier, 2018). Israel is ranked among the highest in both inequality and poverty within the OECD, severly impacting social cohesion (OECD, 2018). Poverty is not distributed evenly among the groups in the Israeli society, with some groups – especially Palestinian citizens and Ultra-Orhodox Jews – suffering from poverty rates of over 50% (Andbald, Gotleib, Heller, & Karadi, 2019).

These four set of conditions set a challenging background for the rise of models of fatherhood in Israel. Very strong cultural perceptions of hegemonic masculinity on the one hand and on the form and role of the normative family on the other leave a narrow space for the development of a participatory model of fatherhood; social division and rising inequality limit the ability of men from excluded groups to influence cultural models on a nationwide scale. However, we wish to claim, that this fractured and tangled reality, while limiting the creation of nation-wide models of caring fatherhood, enable at the same time the growth and development of alternative models of fatherhood in the margins. Two examples of such models may serve as a precursor to the model of 'fatherhood from the margins'.

Wagner (2017) describes emerging models of Haredi (Jewish Ultra-Orthodox) fatherhood. Ultra-orthodox society in Israel is characterized by conservative models of gender relations. However, unlike most western culture, the Haredi culture does not idolize the soldier or the breadwinner as models of masculinity, but rather focuses on religious education. Haredi men are exempt from military service and receive a pension that allows them not to participate in the labour market, and to spend their time on religious studies. Combined with very high fertility rates, high levels of poverty and a growing number of women joining the labor market, Haredi fathers find themselves more and more in situations where they are taking a large part in childcare and housework. However, as Wagner (2017) notes, these fathers do not adopt the secular-liberal model of 'New Masculinity' and 'Involved Fatherhood'. Rather, they develop new perceptions of fatherhood and new practices of fathering, combining the need for paternal involvement with Haredi rejection of modernity and the sanctification of tradition. Taking a major part in childcare and housework is not seen as an attempt to imitate secular-liberal ideals of gender equality, but rather as an attempt to preserve traditional values.

Another example of a model of fatherhood emerging at the margins is that of Palestinian-Israeli fathers in egalitarian families. The Palestinian society in Israel is characterized as conservative, familist and paternalist. Khoury (2018) examines the experiences of Palestinian fathers in egalitarian families, and describes their attempt to define their fatherhood between their conservative immediate surrounding and their life as part of a marginalized minority. Khoury finds that these fathers selectively accept elements from the traditional Palestinian culture and combine them with elements from western (US) ideologies of gender equality, creating a unique ideology of fatherhood.

These case studies show that fathers from excluded and non-hegemonic groups perceive fatherhood and practice fathering in novel and creative ways. While they often deviate from hegemonic norms of fatherhood, they generally acknowledge these norms and combine them with perceptions originating in their own cultures to create their own paths to fatherhood. These cases call for more inclusive, context- and diversity-informed fatherhood studies by incorporating the intersectionality theoretical framework into current scholarship on fathers.

**Discussion**

This article seeks to propose a more inclusive and non-judgmental theoretical perspective to tackle the study of relegated fatherhoods. Using examples of marginalized fathers studies in Israel, the article suggests to incorporate the intersectionality prism to develop a critical perspective on existing knowledge on fatherhood and on fathering practices of fathers belonging to non-hegemonic groups. This perspective may help to challenging common representations of fatherhood in the margins as insufficient and lacking. The marginalization of non-hegemonic fathers in fatherhood studies is not limited to the scarcity of studies. The research that does exist on fathers from these groups relies on conceptions of Western, white middle-class fatherhood being the norm of good fatherhood. As marginalized fathers fail to conform to those standards, they are judged to be lacking. However, as we have demonstrated, their non-compliance with these norms does not reflect neglecting fatherhood, but rather adopting alternative norms of caring for their children and families. Looking into these examples of fatherhood, emerging in the Israeli context, allows us a critical look on previous perceptions of fatherhood in the margins. As discussed earlier, these fathers have been studied from one of two perspectives – the deficit theory and the structural perspective. From the perspective of the deficit theory, fathers from excluded groups are seen as non-functional, bearing responsibility for the insufficient care and lack of resources burdening their children and their families. The disadvantaged position of children in excluded families is attributed, at least partly, to the behavior of these fathers. The structural perspective challenged these perceptions by providing a structural explanation to their failings as fathers – claiming that fathers from excluded groups fail to provide for their children and families not because of their personal or cultural shortcomings, but rather because of their structural position vis a vis society. Ethnic and racial discrimination, precarious workforce position, and other forms of exclusion prevent these fathers from adequately fulfilling their role.

While these two perspectives disagree on the sources of the shortcomings of these fathers, they implicitly agree on their existence. Both agree that fathers from excluded and marginalized groups are under-performing in their fathering roles, although they remain disputed on the reasons for this underperformanc­e, they agree that these fathers fail to provide the necessary support to their children and families, be it because of cultural or personal failings or because of poverty, exclusion, and discrimination. We, however, wish to challenge this assumption of underperformance. While many fathers from excluded groups do not conform to white middle-class norms of fatherhood, the view of their fatherhood as 'underperforming' is misguided. They develop alternative perceptions and practices of fatherhood, combining elements from the hegemonic culture with those of their own marginalized culture.

From this perspective, fathers are not the source of their families' – and society's – problems, as per the deficit theory. Neither are they helpless victims of outside forces, as structural theories portray them. Rather, we offer an alternative perspective that views these fathers as having identities, agencies, and capacities to develop an alternative perception of fatherhood, including independent norms and practices of fatherhood.

In order to analyze this alternative view of fathers in the margins, the article suggests to deepen the study of these groups from an intersectionality theoretical perspective. This perspective may contribute to identify interlocking matrix of oppression, vectors of oppression and privilege of non-hegemonic father groups, which are the key to understanding the situation of these fathers, who often belong to a multitude of marginalized categories.

Thus, Intersectionality theory leads us to adopt a view that focuses on the matrix of oppression that these fathers are subject to, on the one hand, and to the standpoint of the fathers, on the other. From this view, we can pay attention not to the ways people on the outside perceive the fatherhood of these men, but to their own views, perceptions and norms. From this position, we can understand the ways in which fathers from non-hegemonic groups combine their understandings of their position, insights taken from cultures they belong to, and hegemonic perceptions of fatherhood, to create novel ways to care for their children and families in their complex and oppressive position.

However, applying the intersectionality theory to fathers is not without theoretical difficulties. As these theories were developed from feminist perspectives, applying them to men and fathers is not self-evident or simple. From the perspective of the intersectionality theory, can men be considered to be excluded or marginalized on the axis of gender. The fundamental assumption of the intersectional theory is that we seek to study and to promote the standpoint of marginalized and excluded people, whose voice is silenced and not heard. We believe that while these questions pose a substantial theoretical challenge for the application of these theories, this challenge can be overcome. Overcoming this challenge requires, first, applying the proposed theoretical perspective with an eye open to issues of power and oppression, and specifically to more complex systems of power. Acknowledging that actors can be oppressed and, at the same time, oppress others, and keeping an eye open for situations of this nature, may compensate for some of the theoretical hardship.

However, attentiveness to power relations is not sufficient by itself. The position of men, and specifically of fathers, in these feminist theories in general, requires further theorization (Doucet & Lee, 2014). While this theorization exceeds the scope of this paper, we believe that it is a necessary step in providing a better understanding of fathers, and men in general, in marginalized positions. We believe that a critical view of relegated fatherhoods, based on intersectionality and focused on the agency of relegated fathers, have a potential both for research and for social activism, as it expands the range of tools available for analyzing complex and intersectional systems of oppression, enables the adoption of a perspective 'from the margins', and encourages social action for structural change. First, the perspective of relegated fatherhood expands the range of tools for analyzing systems of oppression by applying the theoretical framework of Intersectionality to fathers from marginalized groups. By doing so, it enables us to see the complex matrix of power governing the lives of these fathers – including exclusion and discrimination on ethnic, national, or other backgrounds, precarious position in the workforce, and conflicting gender ideals and norms.

Moreover, adopting this perspective allows us to understand not only what is the matrix of forces affecting relegated fathers, but how these fathers contend with these forces, what meaning do they confer to their actions and choices, and how do they see their fatherhood and fathering. By doing so, we avoid the dichotomy between the 'deadbeat dad' of the deficit theory and the marginalized father of structural theories.

Last, this theory may prove to be conducive to social action toward changing the structural social constrains ­­­of non-hegemonic groups by providing a shared ground to mothers and fathers to challenge systemic intersectional systems of oppression. Understanding the standpoint of these fathers and hearing their voices, alongside those of their spouses and their children, opens new directions and possibilities for coalition forming, social action, and social change. However, this paper offers but a first step in a long path. Applying this framework requires much widening and deepening. First, we have mentioned above some theoretical issues that remain unanswered and require further elaboration – many more may arise and demand answers. Beyond that, much empirical work is still needed to substantiate this theory and to give meaning to our claims on hearing the voice of relegated fathers. We have shown above some examples of the required research. However, many more studies of many more relegated fathers from a variety of backgrounds and situations is still needed for this theory to fulfill the goals mentioned above. Aiming to hear the voices of relegated fathers, this research must incorporate those fathers not as research subjects, whose voices are collected and curated by the academic scholar. This research much include them as research participants, through participatory methodologies of research. Only in this way can the agency of these fathers be adequately represented, both ethically and methodologically.

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